

## DEVOTED TO THE ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

PARTRIDGE AND BRITTAN, PUBLISHERS AND PROPRIETORS, NO. 300 BROADWAY—TERMS, TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE; SINGLE COPIES, FIVE CENTS.

VOL. II.—NO. 31.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1853.

WHOLE NO., 83.

## The Principles of Nature.

## CLAIMS OF THE BIBLE, ETC., EXAMINED.

ESTHER FRIEND, S. B. BRITTAN.

I resume my remarks on the article of thy correspondent, J. R. Orton.

It has long been matter of astonishment to me that the dogma should ever have obtained credence, that the Bible—a collection of writings penned in remote ages, and at intervals during the lapse of many generations—is the product of planetary and infallible inspiration, and the divinely appointed rule of faith and practice to all after times. An idea so unphilosophical, so unworthy of God, and injurious to man, can not be indigenous to the human mind, and can only have originated in the teaching of selfish, religious guides, who perceived it to be a ready means of securing power and maintenance by making themselves indispensable as the expositors of those records.

I have said the idea is unphilosophical, unworthy of God, and injurious to man. A few words in proof will suffice.

1. It is unphilosophical, because at war with the great law of progression, or development from lower to higher, the evidence of the existence of which is written all over the Creator's works, both physical and mental, and by the action of which law higher inspiration—a wider knowledge of truth—must exist now than ever at any anterior period. It, moreover, makes God a changeable being, since it supposes him to have changed his relation to the human mind. For the corollary is clear, that if God sustain the same relation to man as in the assumed period of infallible inspiration, then his action on mind is the same, and all the means of acquiring Divine and Spiritual truth the same, only the acquirement facilitated by man's increased development and consequent capacity to receive. There is no alternative to this conclusion, but the assumption that man has changed—an absurdity which is not pretended by the advocates of the doctrine.

2. It is unworthy of God, not only for the reasons just stated, but because inconsistent with his character of a loving, impartial, universal Parent; since it makes him better to those who lived before us, by giving them higher means of Divine knowledge than he is willing to give to us.

3. It is incalculably injurious to man. Its natural effect is to lead men to rest in what is claimed to have been God's revelations and commands to men in older times, instead of coming to the recognition of his present operations in physical and spiritual nature; instead of coming to be regulated and governed by the law he is continually writing—the word he is ever uttering in the inner sanctuary of the soul. To use the idea of one of the New Testament Scripture writers, it leads them to rest in "the letter" that "killeth," instead of coming to "the Spirit" that "giveth life." It implicitly declares God to have spoken his last word, makes the Bible an idol, and sets it up in the place of the living, ever-working, all-inspiring Father of Spirits. It makes God virtually a dead God, that has faded out of the human mind.

It operates as the greatest possible barrier to man's progress in truth and goodness, since it forbids him to advance, either in theory or practice, even a shade beyond what had been recognized by the writers—men living in long by-gone ages, and many of them in semi-barbarous times and communities. Thus science and religion have been, and yet are, fettered; and it is only as this cord of priestly dogmatism and domination has been snapped or contemned, that either science or true religion has advanced to cheer and bless the world. Further, it exposes man to the liability of becoming the victim of error and deception, whether originating in ignorance or design. For the dogma demands the acceptance of the whole—whether Jewish, Christian, or mixed—as God's infallible word and man's rule; while, too, in the nature of the case, he can have no certain knowledge as to who wrote a large share of the contents of the book in question, or to what alterations and additions they have been subjected by bigoted and selfish men through whose hands they have passed. And again, if he honestly accept the book for what the dogma claims for it, his mind is cast upon a troubled and shoreless sea of conflicting doctrines and practices, from which three results naturally follow—a state of mental distraction, a comparatively quiet refuge in the great self-evident truths it contains, setting aside all that conflicts with them, or, as is the case with too many, a renunciation of the whole, and with it the great and sublime fact of Divine inspiration altogether.

The unnatural position to which this theological, or, in reality, anti-theological and infidel dogma exalts the Bible, prevents, to an incalculable extent, the use and benefit to be derived from the perusal of its venerable pages, when read, as we should read all writings, in a spirit of dispassionate and careful investigation, discriminating between truth and error, according to the highest evidences furnished to the mind. But the force and efficacy of the great and beautiful truths which as brilliant gems of undying lustre shine out ever and anon throughout its pages, are neutralized and in great mea-

sured of their power, by being brought on a par, in point of Divine authority, with doctrines and practices which shock every moral sensibility and make the blood run cold.

The imposture of the dogma is the more striking from the fact that not a single passage is found in the Bible authorizing the assumption that is made for it. It nowhere claims to be the rule of faith and practice to present and future time, nor a filed canon, nor that inspiration and revelation should cease with the tracts included in that volume. On the contrary, most of them were collected and brought together, and assigned the position they occupy, as suited the fancy or judgment of those who did it in after time. I have spoken of the volume as a whole. There is one exception, I admit—and only one—in which the claim to be the rule to present and future generations of a particular people or nation is distinctly asserted, and that relates exclusively to the institutions attributed to Moses. It is very evident that the authors or compilers of the Pentateuch intended that their dogmas and institutions should be perpetual; and had their power over men's minds been commensurate with their will, not a prophet-reformer, nor a Messiah-Jesus, with his progressive doctrines, could have risen up in their midst, and the name Christianity would have been unknown. Hear them—or Moses, if you prefer—"Hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." Deut. iv. 1, 2.

Bibliolatry—the idolatrous worship of the Bible—is emphatically the prevailing vice of a large share of the religiously professing mind of Christendom. And it is to me a strong evidence of the Divine origin of a large proportion of what purport to be communications from the Spirit-world, that they call mankind away both from book-worship and man-worship. And the best and most reliable communications I have seen, caution us not to accept any thing which they (the Spirits communicating) say as infallible, nor any further than the best evidence of our reason sanctions. And this is strikingly one of the excellences of the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis. In reading them, this feature, and their uniform exemption from dogmatism and an exclusive or sectarian spirit, has been to me a source of much pleasure and gratification.

But this is not the case with all that claim to be Spirit-communications, and especially the "Auburn Disclosures," so called, to which I wish briefly to advert before closing. I can not but wonder at the eulogy passed on those writings by thy correspondent, Orton, who is himself certainly a good writer, natural, and mostly perspicuous. He thinks, "as mere literary and logical productions, they would do honor to any age or country." Now, I must confess, my estimate of them generally is very different. As compositions, in point of style, they appear to me singularly and almost ludicrously inflated and grotesque; in point of doctrine, highly mystical, obscure, and not a little absurd. Without extending this article by other specimens of the style, I will refer to a few passages in illustration of my remark as to the character of the doctrine. Page 3, "the circle of apostles and prophets" are represented as saying: "Commissioned by our Sovereign Supreme, we descend again to close proximity to your field of conflict, to bring royal gifts of consolation and of strengthening to all the children of the covenant of the Cross. We come as harbingers of the re-appearing of our Saviour, who is worshipped by all purified and holy intelligences in adoration universal and perpetual; and bring from him to all of his obedient and willing flock the promise, speedy and sure, of deliverance from error, incompleteness, and perplexity of faith: privilege of opening of senses spiritual, and thereby the vision of Paradise, and of the glory of appearing of the Lord in the midst of the splendors of his throne; and from thence the joys of harmonies of praise continual, causing melody, audible in your circles of devotion."

And page 4: "We bring confirmation of the inspired word of prophecy; showing that suffering and loss has befallen men and nations who have violated his statutes; according to proclamations of his purpose, uttered both in the hour of transgression and ages after their time. Especially we open those prophecies which relate to the present well-being of his people, and to the glorious disclosures spiritual, and manifestations of power unconquerable, which are to attract to truth and holiness the sons of men: thus proving that the Bible is the word of God, the cross the hope of ages, and Christ the Supreme Judge, Law-giver, and Sovereign of the world." And again, page 9: "Eternal life is communicated from God the Life through God the Lord, by God the Holy Procedure, who was incarnated in person in the form terrestrial of Jesus Christ our Lord. Within his vehicles of spirit and of person dwelt that Infinite Being who alone is life, love, essence, form, and harmony. He descended thus in infinite humiliation of person, that he might renew the soul of man from his life, the spirit from his love, the understanding from his essence, the person from his form, and pour through his whole nature, pardoned and regenerate, the eternal procedures of his harmony, in beatitudes without end; and thus again quicken, consecrate, and glorify at last the disordered and perishing family of man." "He who in the youth of our race, in his Divine procedure, descend-

ed for our redemption, assuming externally the form of man," etc. . . . "offering himself in atoning sacrifice for transgressors, as was commanded from of old," etc.—P. 21. "God the life descends . . . quickens the eternal faculties within the spirit of those who are obedient unto life and wise unto salvation. He shall expel from their forms all properties of sin, and all principles of disobedience, quickening the energies of good into triumphant ascending over every element of ill; he shall eradicate all perishable properties from their persons, raising them from fear of death into assurance of immortality, and bringing them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; he shall close forever the gates that open into the regions of decay; he shall renew, reinvigorate, and reconsecrate the purchase of his blood," etc.—P. 23. "Fallen man can not of himself arise unto life. . . . Sin so estranged him from holiness that the Spirit of God may not approach him in quickening procedure, by reason of the native repulsion of good and evil, but by incarnation; and can only impart life by the sacrifice of immaculate offering, whose blood poured out unto death, doth issue from the living, thence mingling with the elements of death is therefore life with death, and thus is established a medium for the transmission of heavenly immortalizing love to dying sinners, and through which the living may approach the dead; hence it is written that 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.'"—P. 82.

In the selections I have made I have endeavored to give as fair an exhibition of the doctrinal statement of the "Disclosures" as I could in the space. Now all this may appear to some very clear and "logical." They may not perceive in it any mysticism or obscurity—any "perplexity of faith." They may see no absurdity in the idea of the Author and Sustainer of the universe descending to a condition of "infinite humiliation of person"—offering himself as an atoning sacrifice for transgressors, and that, too, in pursuance of a covenant "of old"—made of course with himself! no absurdity in the assertion that the spirit of God "can only impart life" by a "sacrifice," whose blood is "poured out unto death"—nothing but transparency in what follows, that said blood, issuing "from the living," and mingling with the elements of death, is therefore "life with death," and that "thus is established a medium for the transmission of heavenly immortalizing love to dying sinners," etc. Now if any can find instruction or edification in such collections of words, I am sure I have no wish to deprive them of the privilege. But for myself, I would rather have a few plain sentences like the following, than all the volumes that could be written of such fancies and incomprehensibilities, viz.: "Cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now (or then come) and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Whoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself. This do, and thou shalt live."

But the most objectionable feature of the "Disclosures" is their bigoted sectarian character. This is irretrievably stamped upon them by the fundamental principles laid down for the government of mediums. "You are required," say they, "before acting as mediums for publication of statements from Spirits seeking to communicate, to test their wisdom and holiness by requiring their ascent to the following principles of truth, which all obedient children of God, with fullness of consent, receive, and which the bewitched alone deny."

1. The Divine nature of Jesus Christ, our Lord. His miraculous birth, teachings, and deeds. His sin-offering upon the cross. His bodily resurrection. His re-ascension to the throne of redemption, where he reigns above all, having the keys of death and hell.

2. "The fallen and lost condition of man," etc. "All Spirits who fully consent to this, being of God, are to be afforded every opportunity of communication. All who refuse, or seek to evade consent, are to be met with firmness of decision immovable," etc.—P. 8.

Have the Pope and his Cardinals ever taken higher, more exclusive, or more arrogant ground! Now, whether such doctrines have their origin in the minds of the persons through whose professed mediumship they come, or with Spirits who communicate to them, or both, the minds from whom they emanate give unmistakable evidence of their unprogressed and partisan character, and of their determination that wisdom shall die with them—that the speculative theological standard it has pleased them to erect shall not be transcended by men or angels! This about equals the injunction regarding the Hebrew statutes. But as those have been left behind by some of the prophets—by Jesus and subsequent reformers—so will perish the injunctions and anathemas of the Auburn and Mountain Cove sect.

In conclusion, with all kindness I would say to our friend Orton, he may rest assured that productions like the "Auburn Disclosures," characterized by mysticism, an unnatural or affected style, an obscure and unintelligible array of words in-

tended as explications of the current pulpit doctrines, called orthodox, and the recognition of these irrational, speculative doctrines insisted on as indispensable to acceptance with God—he may rest assured that such productions, if they come from ultra-mundane spheres, are the product of unprogressed Spirits, who have not yet outgrown their materialism. I have two reasons in support of this conclusion:

First. Truth, when perceived by the human mind, is simple, and can be perspicuously conveyed to other minds.

Second. Similar productions of men in this sphere would naturally lead sensible persons to the inference that their authors were greatly deficient in mental development and discipline, and swayed by bigotry and prejudice.

The assumption of the names of prophets or apostles is no certain criterion in the case. It is easy to array name against name. Their genuineness must be judged of by attending facts. Some two and a half years past, I had myself, through a source that I deem reliable, occasion to interrogate Paul relative to these very "Disclosures." To the question, "Hast thou dictated to a company that meet at Auburn, and who have been making certain publications?" The response was, "No, not to much extent, and now not a word. I soon saw I should be as falsely represented as when in the rudimentary sphere, on account of their minds being so warped by that great error and impediment in the way of all truth, sectarianism. They have Spirits of their stamp who represent me, but whom I do not influence at all." Question. "Do those Spirits, then, mean to state that which is false?" Answer. "No, not exactly; but their minds took that bias when on earth, and they think their views of my doctrines are the correct ones, and that way suppose I influence them."

With desire that the truth may have free course and prevail, bearing blessings throughout the earth, thine truly,

THO. MCCLINTOCK.

ABSTRACT OF REV. T. L. HARRIS' DISCOURSE.  
Reported Photographically by T. J. Ellsworth.

The Apostle Peter, in speaking of the departure of our Lord from the external world, says of him, "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, spoken of by all God's holy prophets since the world began." The apostle, in this remark, makes four distinct and equally sublime assertions. First, that the Lord ascended into the heavens; Second, that the heavens are to contain him until a certain period of the future, when he is to return to earth again; Third, that that is to be an era of the restitution of all things; Fourth, that this has been told of from the beginning of the world by all God's seers and prophets.

All of you who are acquainted with the subject of Spiritualism, are familiar with the great law of mental influence by which mind operates upon mind, and life upon life—by means of which the negative individual enters into rapport with the positive individual, thinks his thoughts, feels his feelings, and moves from his volitions. You are aware, also, of the fact, that when this sympathy exists, though the negative person may be in Europe, and the positive person in New York, the positive individual here can telegraph his thoughts, and communicate his sentiments to the negative individual there. Let us apply this well-known scientific fact to the elucidation of the great thought presented for our consideration in the assertion of the apostle—that the Lord shall return. There are many honest individuals in the world who entertain the idea that the Lord is to come in a purely physical form; to become a kind of household god; to locate himself in some external temple, and to reign in a material kingdom. Reasoning from the external, they think there can not be a coming of the Lord, except it be a physical coming, in time and space. But were those friends instructed in the science of the time, they would see that all our Lord has to do to come and make us see him, is to fix his mind upon all the receptive minds in this planet, to make them passive recipients of his divine sphere, and thus to enter into rapport with the whole internal and real Christendom.

Spiritualists are aware that one Spirit can communicate in several places at the same time. The same Spirit can communicate at a circle in Boston, at another circle in New Orleans, at another circle here, and at other circles in other places at the same time, without leaving his locality. He does this by entering into rapport with the minds of the individuals at those different positions; and he can be spiritually visible to each at the same instant. Now if a Spirit, who, while in the body, possessed but ordinary external intelligence, and who was not noted for a broad and universal charity, on entering into the Spirit-world, becomes familiar with the first principles of that world, and has the power to make himself visible to, and to converse with, different persons in the body at the same time, and at different places, what is there to prevent the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the prediction of the prophet, from descending into the interiors of all those who look to him from the earthly sphere, by means of the descent of his divine affections and principles; and in this manner communicating himself with each and every one of them—being personally present with each, and magnetizing each and

every one of them with his divine life of universal benevolence?

It is my own personal belief—and I express it upon the platform of equality with all the brethren—that the age upon which we are now entering, is the age in which that prediction shall be literally and fully verified; and I look upon the great Spiritual Manifestations of the present time simply as an unobtrusive method of opening the interiors of men to receive Him in the fullness of his final coming; for though men's interiors are now open for the reception of influxes from Spirits nearest their own plane, yet as their capacities become enlarged, and their minds become uplifted, they will gradually enter into rapport with societies of higher spheres; until in one crowning and eternal vision, their eyes will be fixed upon One Divine Personality—our Lord Jesus Christ; and he will become visible to them according to the principles of absolute science, and in a manner which will preclude the possibility of doubt; first of all to those persons who are most clairvoyant, and then to the clairvoyant nations of the world. The days of the Son of man—the days of that kingdom which shall be set up without hands, as it appears to me, are returning to us now.

Permit me to give a series of reasons for the great hope that fills my spirit. First, the Lord was in the world, filled with love for every man in it. To that love there was no restriction, and if he loved any people better than others, it was those who needed his love the most. Leaving those who were called righteous, he sought those who were called sinners—leaving those who were in health, he sought the sick—leaving the happy, he sought the distressed—he reached a helping hand to those who, according to the ideas of man, were the most degraded. His whole life was one outflowing of love. His every movement bespoke universal benevolence. God outshone through him, and outpoured love through him. He entered into rapport with the faintest souls of men. His love went on growing with his external growth, and strengthening with his strength. As his experience became broad, he poured it into men. When he touched man, man lived, and when he spoke to man, man loved. No power of human selfishness could destroy that love, or restrain it for a moment; and the more opposition he met with, the more did his love outflow from him, rolling on like a great ocean, bearing before it all forms of antagonism, and destroying the darkness of error as the morning sun scatters the clouds. These things were most of all manifested by the Lord during the last days of his external life; and it seems as if his heart had become a baptismal bowl of love. He had divine attractiveness, divine beauty, divine wisdom, divine power, divine harmony, divine infinitude, but love was the outflowing vitality of all. Behold him extended on the cross, and behold him after the resurrection clothed upon with the stainless garments of righteousness, and you perceive that it is the very revelation of love. Passing out of the external sphere, he is still the same tender, loving being after his resurrection that he was during his sufferings, and his love pours out more and more, especially when he says in his charge to Peter, "Feed my sheep," and "Feed my lambs." And he tells us that his lambs are all the young of all the families of earth, and that his sheep are all mankind.

That being passes from our vision. He has gone into that great interior world where he was before—he has gone among those shining ones who sat by his grave on the morning of the resurrection, and said, "He is not here, he has risen"—he is among the guardian spirits of the human race, and among them he is the Prince of Peace—the Lord of Righteousness. His sovereignty is the sovereignty of love. There is no more grand conception than that our planet is over-ruled by angelic hosts—that all body Spirits are gathered around it in harmony; and in my highest thoughts it seems to me that the center of all that infinite revolving harmony of angelic life is the Lord, our Redeemer. His love, as an external form, enlarges itself with the enlargement of experience, and goes on deepening from age to age. He promises to be with his children to the very end of ages, giving them a special influx. He promises to be the inspiration of Christendom, and in fulfillment of that promise, was the great Civilizer, Humanizer, and Harmonizer; and up from the old world of darkness springs the new age of light, immortality, and peace, unfolding from his divinely ordered love. That era has gone on interweaving into the planet its golden influences of harmony, which shall draw it into the vision of his countenance.

For eighteen hundred years all the movements of society have extended toward unity—a condition in which man could think and act freely, and unfold the spontaneity of his nature, so that the spiritual should control the natural. Before the new heaven could descend, there had to be a platform upon which it could descend. It could not but have kings, sages, and aristocrats were against it; it could not unfold until it was unhampered by priests and kings, and free from material relations to Church and State; and the good nature to go out peacefully and carry out their inspirations into the sphere of the external. It appears to me that Divine Providence, ever since the appearance of the Lord, has been bringing the











